

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7106

S E C R E T LIBREVILLE 1902

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS1

TAGS: PFOR, AO, GB, US

SUBJ: BONGO REQUESTS ARMS FOR SELF AND ANGOLA

SUMMARY. BONGO HAS REQUESTED BOTH ARMS FOR GOG AND USE OF GABON AS CONDUIT FOR ARMS TO ANTI-MPLA MOVEMENTS IN ANGOLA. ACTION REQUESTED: OFFICIAL REPLY TO TWO-PART BONGO REQUEST, IF POSSIBLE BY END OF WEEK. END SUMMARY.

1. WHEN I CALLED PRESIDENT BONGO NOVEMBER 18 TO PRESS FOR NEGATIVE GOG VOTE ON HOSTILE KOREAN RESOLUTION, HE SEIZED OPPORTUNITY TO ASK FOR USG ARMS FOR BOTH GABON AND ANGOLAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS CURRENTLY OPPOSING MPLA.
2. PRESIDENT SAID THAT NORTH KOREANS HAD OFFERED HIM LIST OF WEAPONS AND MATERIEL, PRESUMABLY IN EXCHANGE FOR FAVORABLE UNGA VOTES. NOT ONLY WAS HE LOSING THESE BY HIS STANCE, HE CONTINUED, BUT HE WOULD INCUR ENMITY OF DPRK AND PRESUMABLY OF SUCH DPRK SUPPORTERS AS USSR. BONGO SAID HE WAS NOT AFRAID OF PRC, BUT "ONE DOES NOT KNOW" WHAT RUSSIANS ARE LIKELY TO DO. IN VIEW OF HOSTILE "BASES" IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA AND CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE, HE ADDED, GABON MUST BE ABLE DEFEND ITSELF IF NEED ARISES.

3. GOG DEFENSE POSTURE HAS BEEN WEAKENED, PRESIDENT WENT ON, BY GIVING SOME OF ITS ARMS TO UNITA. GABON NEEDS TO REPLACE THESE, AND ALSO COULD SERVE AS CONDUIT FOR ADDITIONAL ARMS DELIVERIES TO ANGOLAN LIBERATION

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MOVEMENTS OPPOSED TO MPLA. MOBUTU, BONGO ALLEGED, KEEPS

MODERN ARMS SENT TO HIM FOR ONWARD SHIPMENT TO FNLA, UNITA AND FLEC, SENDING THEM HIS CAST-OFFS INSTEAD. THIS, HE SAID, IS REASON WHY FLEC, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS BEEN UNABLE OUST MPLA FROM CABINDA, SINCE LATTER ARE RECEIVING SOPHISTICATED SOVIET WEAPONS IN LARGE QUANTITIES WHILE FLEC IS USING OUTMODED EQUIPMENT.

4. IN REPLY, I OUTLINED FOR PRESIDENT OFFICIAL USG POLICY ON ANGOLA AS SET FORTH STATE 265503, AND STRESSED OUR DESIRE SEE SINGLE REGIME EMERGE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE FROM CURRENT STRIFE. AS FOR POSSIBILITY OF SUPPLYING ARMS TO GOG ITSELF, I SAID WE WERE ALWAYS PREPARED TO ENTERTAIN GABONESE REQUESTS TO PURCHASE WEAPONS AND MATERIEL IN U.S. (AS THEY HAD DONE WITH PATROL BOAT NGUENE AND ITS WEAPONRY), BUT THAT WE WERE MOVING AWAY FROM GRANTS OR EVEN CONCESSIONAL FINANCING FOR ARMS SUPPLY AND HOLDING INCREASINGLY TO STRAIGHT SALES.

5. DESPITE MY STATEMENTS, PRESIDENT RETURNED TO HIS REQUEST FOR USG "GESTURE" IN FORM OF ARMS OR FINANCING FOR PURCHASE OF ARMS, AND ASKED THAT IT BE TRANSMITTED TO WASHINGTON FOR CONSIDERATION. HE ALSO REITERATED HIS INTEREST IN SERVING AS CONDUIT FOR ARMS TO ANGOLAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, ASSERTING ONCE AGAIN THAT GABON WOULD BE MORE RELIABLE TRANSSHIPPER THAN ZAIRE. PRESIDENT CLOSED CONVERSATION BY REQUESTING OFFICIAL REPLY FROM USG TO HIS INQUIRIES ON BOTH SUBJECTS, AND EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT REPLY WOULD BE AFFIRMATIVE IF PROBLEM COULD BE BROUGHT TO PERSONAL ATTENTION OF SECRETARY KISSINGER WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY "TAKEN CARE OF EVERYTHING" WHEN DIFFICULTIES AROSE IN CONNECTION WITH DC-8 PURCHASE.

6. COMMENT: PRESIDENT HAS BEEN TRYING OBTAIN "GESTURES" IN ARMS FIELD FROM OTHERS BEFORE US. WHILE FRENCH PRESUMABLY CONTINUE INCLUDE CONCESSIONAL ELEMENT IN THEIR ARMS SUPPLIES, GERMANS AT LEAST HAVE RECENTLY DECLINED PROVIDE BONGO WITH ARMORED CARS HE WAS SEEKING AS FRG GIFT.

7. DESPITE PRESIDENT'S DECLARED CONFIDENCE IN USG READINESS RESPOND FAVORABLY TO HIS TWO REQUESTS, I DOUBT IF  
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HE WILL BE VERY SURPRISED TO RECEIVE WASHINGTON REPLY ALONG LINES OF PARA 4 ABOVE ON QUESTION OF "GESTURE" TO GOG. I SUSPECT BONGO'S GREATER INTEREST LIES IN SECOND HALF OF HIS PROPOSAL, ON WHICH RESPONSE WILL NECESSARILY BE MORE DELICATE. PRESIDENT APPEARS CONVINCED THAT USG

IS FUNNELING ARMS TO ANGOLAN GROUPS THROUGH ZAIRE, AND CLEARLY SEES NO REASON WHY MOBUTU SHOULD HAVE MONOPOLY ON THIS FUNCTION. PRESUMABLY INSPIRED BY HIS OWN EXPERIENCE AS CONDUIT FOR FRENCH ARMS DURING NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR, BONGO MAY WELL SEE TRANSSHIPMENT TO FLEC, UNITA, AND/OR FNLA BOTH AS WAY OF GETTING MORE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN ANGOLAN SITUATION AND ALSO AS METHOD OF UPSTAGING MOBUTU.

8. WHILE BONGO WOULD OBVIOUSLY PREFER AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE TO HIS PROPOSALS, MOST ESSENTIAL THING IS TO GIVE HIM ANSWER WHICH CAN BE PRESENTED AS RESULT OF SERIOUS HIGH-LEVEL CONSIDERATION APPROPRIATE TO REQUEST FROM FRIENDLY HEAD OF STATE. WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S ASSISTANCE IN SECURING PROMPT REPLY WHICH I CAN PRESENT TO PRESIDENT BEFORE END OF WEEK. STEIGMAN

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**TAGS:** PFOR, AO, GB, US, MPLA, FNLA, UNITA, (BONGO, ALBERT BERNARD)  
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